Management Commitment

Top management sets the tone for the entire safety program. A sincere commitment by management and consistency in the enforcement of safety rules are the foundation of an effective safety program.

The chief executive, business owner and other highly visible leaders must maintain a positive attitude toward safety to inspire this attitude in supervisors and employees down the line. Managers and supervisors reflect the image of upper management and a worker's attitude is usually the same as his or her supervisor's. This principle applies equally to all businesses and institutions, no matter how large or small.

Creating a Culture of Safety: Developing a Safety Policy

Foremost, management must express its concern for the health, safety and well-being of employees. In both large companies and small businesses, top management must make safety a priority by effectively expressing its commitment to safety to workers.

Creating a culture of safety begins with developing a written safety policy. Express your commitment to safety in a clear, simple safety policy to all employees. The safety policy should be conspicuously posted, delivered to individual workers, and become part of employee orientation training.

Policy Statement & Safety Committees

Along with creating a culture of safety, another common thread in companies with successful safety programs is the safety committee. These committees are responsible for making periodic safety surveys and finding hazards and unsafe work practices that are often overlooked.

Safety committees meet to review accident reports and make recommendations to management for the elimination of hazards or correction of unsafe work habits. Committee meetings are also an opportunity to introduce new safety ideas through visual education, demonstrations of safety equipment, and safety talks.

Who should be included on a safety committee?

The safety committee should include key members of the management team, the maintenance supervisor, general supervisors and the manager responsible for the safety program.

Larger organizations may require more than one committee. A management committee can decide matters of policy, while other committees serve specific functions, such as accident investigations and plant inspections. Labor-management, supervisory, or department head committees are often effective.

How do safety committees remain effective?

It is essential that a safety committee have authority. The level of authority will depend on a committee's membership and the extent of its responsibilities. Committees that lack management support very often are ineffective.

Safety committees must **meet regularly**, preferably not less than once a month. Infrequent meetings lead to a loss of interest and deterioration of the safety program. Meetings should **have an agenda** and be brief. Smaller committees, where all members are able to participate, are usually most effective.

Membership rotation is important because a self-perpetuating group tends to stagnate. A rotating membership makes best use of knowledgeable and talented workers. By staggering tenure, the committee will always have some experienced members.

Safety committees should *never become involved in labor-management matters unrelated to safety.* This can be very destructive. The safety committee should limit involvement to safety matters.

Elements of a Written Safety Policy

The safety policy should state that concern for the health, safety and well-being of employees is a continuing responsibility of all executive and supervisory personnel. It should further state that such concern will be demonstrated by eliminating hazards and providing all employees with proper training in safe work practices. Make clear that

rules will be established and enforced to insure the maintenance of a healthful and safe workplace. It is imperative to follow through on all of the items outlined in the safety policy.

Safety Training

All businesses should plan, create and maintain safe working conditions. Safe conditions and safety training combined produce a safe operation.

The backbone of loss prevention is the reduction of unsafe acts and unsafe conditions on a daily basis. Safe work habits are the result of education, training, continuous observation and feedback.

Communication is vital. Teach new workers the safe way to perform their duties, and do remedial training with experienced workers when necessary. It's not enough to simply tell workers what to do. There must be follow-up and feedback to make sure workers understand and follow through on safe work practices.

Constant reinforcement is an effective way to change unsafe employee behavior and emphasize safe work practices. The person most effective in this area is your first line supervisor.

Supervisor Training is Key

Supervisors must have sufficient training in safe work methods to provide adequate on-the-job training to their workers. As key personnel in any safety program, first line supervisors must receive thorough safety training and proper motivation.

Because they are ultimately responsible for safety in their departments their full cooperation is vital to the entire program. First-line supervisors must assume full authority and responsibility for enforcing safety rules and regulations. They must understand that safe operations increase productivity by building workers' confidence and relieving their fear.

It is extremely important for the supervisor to observe all safety rules. A supervisor's acts do more to motivate employees than words.

Supervisors must receive continuing safety education and training. It is difficult for supervisors with limited safety education to establish and maintain safe workplaces.

Employee Cooperation

Employee cooperation is vital to the success of your safety program. The following measures can be powerful motivators to gain employee cooperation.

- Create an effective safety culture by establishing a safety policy.
- Secure worker interest by involving them personally.
- Develop proper training methods.
- Display relevant safety posters.
- Make workers aware of the self-interest they have in their own safety.
- Select motivated employees for safety committees and first aid training.
- Involve all employees in your safety program.
- Convince employees that safety policies are designed for their personal protection.
- Demonstrate that unsafe acts and conditions are unacceptable in all facets of the operation.
- Do not permit staff to deviate from safe practices.
- No one is immune from accidents!

Safety Surveys

The safety survey is a key element of successful safety programs. Supervisors should make regular, detailed surveys of their areas to detect unsafe conditions, such as those arising from mishandling of materials, scrap accumulation, or wear and tear on machinery. Supervisors also should observe employees for unsafe work practices. Identifying unsafe acts is just as important as discovering unsafe conditions.

Safety surveys should identify things that are right, as well as things that are wrong, and target improvements that can reduce accident exposure. Cover your entire operation and all areas of safety, whether it takes one survey or a series of surveys to obtain the complete picture.

Accident Investigation

Every accident and near-accident—if properly reported, investigated and analyzed—is an opportunity to prevent recurrence through corrective action. It is a good practice to investigate and report all accidents and significant incidents promptly to determine the cause. Employers should establish a fixed procedure requiring the reporting of every injury no matter how trivial.

Supervisors and workers must know to report every accident or incident even when medical treatment isn't necessary. Today's bruised knuckles may become tomorrow's fractured hand without pinpointing and correcting the cause of the injury. The same holds true of near-miss incidents. Falling objects deserve attention even when they don't hit anyone.

Maintain records for analysis. An analysis of your accident experience is a reliable way of revealing the weak spots in your safety program. Failure to act on these warnings eventually leads to costly accidents. Familiarize yourself with both workers' compensation reporting and OSHA log recording requirements.